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**Population and
Housing Inquiries
in U.S. Decennial
Censuses, 1790-1970**

U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF COMMERCE
Social and Economic
Statistics Administration

BUREAU OF
THE CENSUS



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Population and Housing Inquiries in U.S. Decennial Censuses, 1790-1970

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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PREFACE

Beginning with their earliest history, the people of the United States have had a keen interest in facts about themselves and about the conditions affecting their lives. Since the first decennial census in 1790, which provided the basis for apportioning the number of representatives in Congress from the various States and for assessing the Nation's growth, the census has been relied upon to furnish the basic data needed for planning on all levels, both in government and in private enterprise.

The population and housing inquiries in the 19 decennial censuses that have been taken to date reflect the changing interests and data needs of the government and its people, including a strong emphasis on detailed personal facts about the handicapped and the institutional population in the nineteenth century, concern with housing, employment, and income during more recent decades, and, in the last two censuses, special attention to place of work and means of transportation to work.

The changing content of the censuses is shown in this report in two ways:

1. Charts display the inquiries asked in all the decennial censuses taken to date, in summary form, ignoring minor variations in the questions and question wording. One can thus see at a glance which of the censuses included an inquiry on literacy, for example.

The inquiries included are those which were asked nation-wide. Questions which were used only in a particular State, Territory, or outlying area are omitted.

The surveys of residential finance taken in connection with the 1950, 1960, and 1970 censuses are not covered here, nor are the surveys of components of housing inventory change taken in connection with the 1960 and 1970 censuses; the complete questionnaires are reproduced in separate publications (see "Bibliography," p. 179.)

2. The principal data-collection forms are reproduced so that the exact wording of the questions may be examined and compared. The general population and housing schedules are shown, and those supplemental schedules used on a nation-wide basis which included supplemental questions.

In the case of several pre-1900 supplemental questionnaires which could not be located, only the wording of the questions (as reported in a generally accurate census history published in 1900) is given.

Supplemental questionnaires used to enumerate special groups in the population but which did not include additional questions (for example, some questionnaires used to enumerate persons who were not at their usual place of residence at the time of the census) are not shown.

Only the questionnaires in English are shown. In some cases, translations were made for special language groups; these are not covered in this publication.

For the 1950, 1960, and 1970 censuses, only the data questions are shown (that is, headings, geographic identification items, etc., are not shown), since the complete questionnaires are reproduced in separate publications (see "Bibliography," p. 179.)

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